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due to a few well-defined causes, of which consumption is one of the most prominent. Unless, therefore, the vital statistics of the two races are carefully distinguished, some of the most useful facts are lost sight of and some of the most valuable sanitary and health lessons are not taught by the health reports.

F. S. CRUM.

IMPROVEMENT OF VITAL STATISTICS.

Registration of Deaths. Including a paper on "The Essential Requirements of a Law for the Registration of Deaths and the Collection of Mortality Statistics," prepared by the Committee on Demography of the American Public Health Association. (Circular.) United States Census Office, No. 71, pp. 10.

Practical Registration Methods. Information for local registrars as to the standard certificate, forms of records, and indefinite causes of death reported by physicians. United States Census Office, 1903, No. 101, pp. 28.

Relation of Physicians to Mortality Statistics. The international classification of causes of death as adopted by the United States Census Office and approved by the American Public Health Association. United States Census Office, 1903, No. 102, pp. 26.

Registration of Births and Deaths. Drafts of laws and forms of certificates. Bureau of the Census, No. 104, pp. 31.

Statistical Treatment of Causes of Death. Co-operative work relative to treatment of jointly returned causes and the revision of the international classification. Bureau of the Census, No. 105, pp. 19.

Extension of the Registration Area for Births and Deaths. A practical example of co-operative census methods as applied to the State of Pennsylvania. Bureau of the Census, No. 106, pp. 51.

Modes of Statement of Cause of Death and Duration of Illness upon Certificates of Death. Comparison of forms now in use in the United States and certain other countries, and suggestions of a modification of the standard certificate of death in order to secure uniform and definite statements of causes of death. Check-list of registration officials, reports, and bulletins. Bureau of the Census, No. 107, pp. 81.

The first three of these pamphlets were issued by the Division of Vital Statistics under the direction of Mr. W. A. King, former chief statistician for vital statistics. The last four were more recently published under the direction of the present chief, Dr. Cressy L. Wilbur. Together they give abundant evidence of the vigorous efforts of the federal government

to improve the quality of the vital statistics of the United States. The Census Office at the present time does not make any independent effort to collect statistics of births and deaths. Its statistics are based upon the returns of local and State offices in the so-called registration area, and obviously its work is affected by the quality of local registration. One of the greatest defects is lack of uniformity of procedure in the several States, and it is the endeavor of the Census Office to remedy this defect. These pamphlets represent a campaign of education along this line, and give hopeful promise of great improvement in the future.

The last in this series, No. 107, is by far the most important. It includes an account of the methods of reporting causes of death and duration of illness in the United States. A copy is given of the standard certificate of death which is followed at the present time in eight States and in twenty-one cities outside of the given States. Copies are also given of "modified standard certificates of death." The practice of foreign countries is also detailed. Interesting comments are added on the terminology of terms employed on certificates of death to denote cause of death. Illustrations are also given showing the confusion which arises from the inexact use of "causes." This pamphlet closes with a check list of registration of officials and a record of the health bulletins issued by the several State and municipal offices.

THE LIMITATIONS OF STATISTICS.

William H. Allen, in his "Efficient Democracy," has written an Epistle to the Gentiles preaching a new gospel of the statistical method as a guide to life. He tells us that goodness is nothing without efficiency, and that efficiency finds its firm foundation in the statistical method. Just plain goodness is not enough: one must be "good for something," and this "something" is purely objective and may be counted, weighed, and tested; and efficiency develops goodness, as the time-clock and the cash register develop habits of punctuality and honesty.

And Dr. Allen, in the true evangelistic spirit, will not allow this way of holiness to remain the esoteric possession of a statistical priesthood. He goes forth to preach the statistical gospel to "every man." He tells us, indeed, that, like M. Jourdain in another field of human knowledge, we all have been more or less unconscious statisticians all our lives. We are told that, when we are conducting the ordinary operations of reasoning, we are statisticians; that the scientist reaches his result by "statistics"; that business method is practically the statistical method; and that the carpenter and plumber are quite as "statistical" as the political